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SUBJECT: DPKO-UNIFIL JOINT TECHNICAL REVIEW

Classified By: Political Counselor Jeffrey DeLaurentis for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On December 1, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) hosted a meeting with Security Council Lebanon experts to share initial findings concerning the ongoing joint technical review of UNIFIL. DPKO's initial findings recommend the creation of a southern sector in UNIFIL's area of operations; a new training structure designed to enhance staff officer performance; and maintaining the Maritime Task Force (MTF) with a minimum of 8 ships. Each of the two parties, Lebanon and Israel, has shared its input on the review with some council members. The Lebanese Mission sent an October 19 letter to the Security Council concerning the DPKO/UNIFIL review that focused on political, not technical issues. On the Israeli side, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) liaison to UNIFIL, COL Brovender, visited New York on November 30. In a meeting at USUN, he stressed Israel's continuing support of UNIFIL; preference for no decrease in force strength, troop composition, or distribution of forces; and he urged an intensified use of the tripartite process. End summary.

RE-EXAMINING UNIFIL, THREE YEARS IN

¶2. (SBU) The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) are currently conducting a joint technical review of UNIFIL, as set out in Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's August 6 letter to the Security Council and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1884. (Note: This review coincides with the scheduled hand-over of the UNIFIL command. Though the formal announcement remains pending, USUN understands that Secretary-General Ban has approved the nomination of Spanish Major-General Alberto Asarta to succeed Italian Major-General Graziano as the new UNIFIL force commander in late January 2010. End note.)

¶3. (SBU) The review is being conducted in a two-stage process. The first phase, already launched by UNIFIL, is comprised of working groups and a steering committee tasked with making recommendations in adjusting force structure, assets and requirements. In the second phase, a UNHQ mission, led by DPKO's Office of Operations, will visit UNIFIL units, installations and other locations, and, together with UNIFIL, will assess and make recommendations on the findings of the initial phase. The review team will report its conclusions to the Secretary-General by January 2010, with a summary of those conclusions to be included in the Secretary-General's next quarterly report on the implementation of UNSCR 1701 in February 2010. The UNHQ mission is scheduled to travel to Lebanon during the week of December 7, 2009.

¶4. (SBU) On December 1, DPKO hosted a meeting with Security Council Lebanon experts concerning the review. DPKO Middle East Team Leader Kristina Segulja led the meeting with Italian Brigadier General Dario Ranieri, acting director of the UNIFIL Strategic Military Cell (SMC). Throughout the

meeting, they stressed that the technical review would focus solely on the operational capacity of UNIFIL, and not on its mandate, its Rules of Engagement (ROE), or its performance. Segulja outlined the review's objectives, which also appear in the review's terms of reference. (Note: The terms of reference will be e-mailed to IO/UNP. End note.) The objectives are as follows:

- (a) Determine appropriate forward-looking adjustments to the Force structure in an effort to adapt UNIFIL's operational capacity to changes in the operational environment that have taken place since 2006;
- (b) Review the Mission's force requirements, including the appropriate number of infantry, engineering, and specialized units, as well as ground and air assets, and mobility and rapid reaction capabilities;
- (c) Review the operational effectiveness and asset requirements of the Maritime Task Force;
- (d) Assess the Mission support structure, clarify existing support capabilities, and determine the adequate ratio of forces and support units;
- (e) Assess the liaison and coordination arrangements with the parties;
- (f) Evaluate the current level of coordinated operational activities and capacity-building activities with the Lebanese Armed Forces;

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- (g) Assess mission integration and coordination processes;
- (h) Assess the Mission's security structure and force protection arrangements;
- (i) Assess the Mission's communications strategy and resources, including outreach and civil affairs activities; and
- (j) Identify budget and personnel implications of proposals for any changes to the force structure assets and requirements.

RE-ORGANIZE UNIFIL SECTORS?

15. (SBU) During the meeting, Segulja and Ranieri emphasized that the initial findings of the review do not indicate a need for any radical changes in the overall number of UNIFIL personnel, but do recommend a reconfiguration of UNIFIL forces, to match the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Ranieri explained that UNIFIL currently organizes its operations into East and West sectors, with those sectors led by Spanish and Italian forces, respectively. However, the initial review recommends the addition of another sector in the South, so that UNIFIL forces better align with the LAF's distribution of three brigades in southern Lebanon. Austrian military advisor Bernd Lubenik questioned whether the need to expand to a third sector was necessary or wishful thinking. Segulja responded that it was not an operational requirement. (Note: USUN understands from UNIFIL SMC sources that UNIFIL is recommending the maintenance of two sectors unless a troop-contributing country (TCC) comes forward and offers a third sector headquarters battalion and associated staff, which would include another Brigadier General. UNIFIL is most likely looking for a French or Indonesian commitment, as they have the third and fourth largest forces in UNIFIL, respectively. End note.)

16. (SBU) The initial findings of the joint technical review also suggested that UNIFIL implement a dedicated training structure to increase its forces' capabilities as well as

those of the LAF and the Lebanese Navy. Lubenik asked what the specific goals of the new training would be, to which UNIFIL staff responded that it would focus on educating staff officers in order to enhance planning, cooperation, and organization abilities, as well as improve demining activities. They stressed that nothing controversial would be taught in this training. When asked to rationalize why the UNIFIL force had maintained its size three years after the cessation of hostilities, Segulja claimed that the mission was worth its cost, but that the situation is still precarious and therefore a robust UNIFIL presence is needed. She reminded the room that, although Phase 2 of UNIFIL's Concept of Operations (CONOPS) could not be completed until Israel ends its occupation of northern Ghajar, progress was already being made on Phase 3. She added that both the LAF and the IDF feel that the review is timely and that past cooperation has been good.

MTF -- 8 VESSELS MINIMUM

¶7. (SBU) Ranieri fielded a number of questions regarding whether the minimum number of ships supplied to the Maritime Task Force (MTF) was sufficient and sustainable. He reported that although a ship-to-task review found that the MTF could operate best with a fleet of 12 vessels, it was currently working with 8 ships. Segulja added that the MTF has hailed over 26,000 vessels in search of contraband, while the LAF Navy has only stopped approximately 200 ships. She stated that the LAF has not officially documented any contraband as a result of its searches. Although she acknowledged the fact that MTF fleet size depends on international support, Segulja said that the fleet cannot maintain current levels of operation with less than 8 ships.

¶8. (SBU) The Lebanese Deputy Perm Rep who was invited to the meeting as an incoming Council member observer only, nevertheless spoke up at the meeting as a party to the conflict, saying that she was sure the LAF would respond positively to all the issues raised by DPKO. She also asked what the benchmarks might be for assessing violations to Lebanon's sovereignty, and stressed that all violations by all parties must be addressed.

LEBANON FOCUSES ON POLITICAL ISSUES

¶9. (SBU) The Lebanese mission sent a letter dated October 19 to the Security Council President outlining the Government of Lebanon's (GOL) position on the DPKO/UNIFIL joint technical

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review. The letter reiterated the GOL's call for Israel to stop breaching its obligations under resolution 1701, including violations of land, air, and water, utilization of spy networks and devices, and continued occupation of Ghajar, the Kafar Shuba Hills and the Lebanese Shab'a Farms. The GOL also called for an enhancement and expeditious marking of the Blue Line, and called upon the international community to consider further assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, as well as in building up the LAF. The letter stated that no new weapons were found within UNIFIL's area of operation as a result of patrolling and search activities, and underlined the importance of a permanent cease-fire replacing the current cessation of hostilities.

ISRAEL SUGGESTS IMPROVEMENTS TO UNIFIL

¶10. (C) On November 30, USUN POL and MSC officers met with Israeli Defense Force (IDF) Colonel Shai Brovender who is the IDF's liaison to UNIFIL, Lieutenant Colonel Avi Elayhu from the Israeli Embassy in Washington, and Israeli Mission PolCouns Amir Weissbrod. Brovender, whose visit was timed to coincide with the review, emphasized that UNIFIL is indeed

operating well, but that the situation continues to be fragile. Therefore, he stressed, the GOI does not want to see a decrease in UNIFIL troop levels or European troop contributions. The GOI is supportive of the MTF even at its reduced size, noting that it believes it likely has successfully deterred maritime smuggling operations. He also underscored that the GOI does not want to see a reduction or consolidation of UNIFIL posts or bases, believing that a wider dispersal of UNIFIL assets keeps Hezbollah on the defensive. Brovender added that with a new incoming UNIFIL commander, a recently formed Lebanese government, and Iranian influence constantly looming overhead, now is not the time to scale back UNIFIL operations.

¶11. (C) Brovender also had a number of suggestions on how to improve UNIFIL operations, including the tripartite process. He recommended that tripartite meetings be held at the subcommittee level as well, for example to mark the Blue Line. He urged that there be a maritime tripartite meeting to discuss a maritime buffer zone to further ease tensions at sea. He recommended that direct field-level communications be opened up between DPKO brigade commanders and IDF field commanders (currently, all correspondence between the two is directed through UNIFIL headquarters). Finally, he suggested that UNIFIL take full advantage of its mandate, such as investigating in the streets of villages and only calling in the LAF at the last minute to inspect a suspicious building, since, he claimed, the villagers are often warned by the LAF that an inspection will happen.

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